

NEW YEAR'S EVE

Saying a Not so Fond Farewell to 2017!

Saying farewell to 2017 doesn't bring many tears for most of us. It has been a hard year for many of us, both in what it brought and in what it portends for at least the next few years. As many of you may recall, I have had a hard time letting go of the outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election. I know some of you thought that we ought to give Trump a chance, and I really tried to do that—mostly because I really had no choice, but look at what damage he has caused, what little he has accomplished and all that he is taking credit for doing! The changes to health care and deductions will hurt many of us in the middle class and I expect we will have a long wait before anything positive trickles down from the wealthy or corporations. I suppose we should count it as positive that as hard as he has tried, he hasn't gotten us into a nuclear war with North Korea yet. And the stock market continues to soar as wealth begets more wealth!

The Mueller investigation is beginning to bear fruit as Trump continues to deny collusion with Russia. Methinks he doth protest too much! Only time will tell whether the Republicans will continue to play the situation for all they can get or whether they will actually discover a backbone and undertake a moral response for the good of the country and impeach him. So far it looks like it will take a change of congress to get there, no matter what he does.

As we look at 2017, it has been a year of wins for corporations and a year of losses for women, LGBTQ persons, Native Americans, Muslims, Blacks and other persons of color, the homeless, middle & lower class persons, everyone with health problems, and so many more. Leaking pipelines are damaging native lands just as feared. New drilling will endanger pristine wilderness, and renewed use of coal & removal of pollution restrictions will hasten global climate change & threaten all life. It continues to amaze me what denials & lies big and small will accomplish even in the face of the best scientific evidence.

So here we are, ending 2017 with many regrets, many fears, and much to worry about for the coming year of 2018. There is so much of 2017 I would like to leave behind, let go of, and move past. In a few moments, we will have an opportunity to do that, at least symbolically, so I invite you to think of those things you, personally or collectively would like to leave behind. Write them down on the card or paper you were given and more instructions will follow after I finish the sermon.

Sometimes we need to let go of things to move on in our lives. So often the world and our lives do not work out the way that we plan, so we just need to let go of what is past and get a new start. I have never liked the idea of New Year's Resolutions, but they are a kind of new start, even if they only last a few days or hours. I do believe that we need to let go of unfulfilled hopes and dreams in the process of creating new hopes and dreams. It has often been suggested that the dinosaurs and other species died off at least in part because they could not adjust to changing circumstances. Now we have evidence that worldwide temperature and climate changes after a massive meteor strike probably ended many of those species. As human beings we have been able to adapt to different climates by adding or removing layers of clothing, protecting ourselves within insulated houses, and creating heating and cooling devices to keep our homes, businesses and vehicles within a temperature range we like.

We humans are really quite adaptable but there may be limits past which we will not be able to survive. As human populations grow worldwide, there also may be limits to the amount of food that can be grown and to the amount of oxygen that is being produced by plants. We know that human mortality increases as particulate contaminants and greenhouse gases increase in the atmosphere. I hope that there will be major changes in leadership soon that will push for lower emission limits for vehicles, factories, and power plants. China is rapidly taking the lead in decreasing use of coal and increasing use of solar power. Every civilized nation but ours considers health care a right rather than a consumer commodity. Only in the US is health care a profit source for corporations, so not surprisingly health care quality for the poor has plummeted. So many advances are now being exploited by corporations.

During 2017 there has been a serious lack of justice for individuals and groups, with very little compassion shown for anyone. These are surely not the best of times, and it often seems that we are moving toward some new feudal society in which the corporate overlords have all the power and poor individuals have none. Many have been resisting the power of Trump, Corporations, and the Republicans throughout 2017, but will there be enough energy to create real change before the republicans have consolidated their power by disenfranchising millions of people? The wealth of corporations and the power of Congress, the Courts, and the White House, can be an almost insurmountable barrier to the return of democracy. As we say farewell to 2017, we look forward to many challenges in the year to come. I would love to leave so much of this behind, but our Unitarian Universalist values and Principles will continue to challenge us to seek justice that will respect all persons without regard to wealth, gender, age, shade of skin, or level of ability. As we leave behind the failures of 2017, we must again take up the mantle as we approach the new year of 2018. Perhaps it is the fear of failure that we most need to leave behind as we prepare to engage the battles ahead.

Therefore, on this last day of 2017, let us clear out the debris of fears and shattered dreams. Let us say farewell to the failures and challenges of 2017, and prepare ourselves for whatever will come in the New Year 2018.

I invite you to come forward bringing all that you wish to let go of from the year now dying. As I light the flame in the cauldron, I invite you to light your paper and let it go into the cauldron so that the flames will release the spirit held in these matters and leave only the ashes of 2017. If you wish to, you may share what you are letting go of, but otherwise just let the flame do its work.

As we have now released all these matters back to the universe, we open ourselves now to the new challenges of the year coming. We pray that 2018 will be a year of peace and blessing, in which all people will have enough to eat, safe shelter, medical care, and the love of family and friends.

So may it Be! Shalom, Salaam, Blessed Be, Namaste, and Amen!